

PROCESS: AGING

SERVES FOUR
As a main

ZA'ATAR CACIO E PEPE

table salt

14 oz/400g dried

bucatini (or other long
pasta, cooking time
adjusted if necessary)

**¼ cup/50g unsalted
butter**

1 tbsp za'atar, plus 1½ tsp

2 tsp black pepper

4½ oz/130g Parmesan,
very finely grated

1 oz/30g pecorino, very
finely grated

7½ tsp olive oil

**2 tsp whole marjoram
leaves** (optional)

Messing with an Italian classic is not something that we do lightly, but adding za'atar really doesn't take anything away from the much-admired simplicity of this dish. All it does is add a layer of delicious herbiness that goes hand in hand with the pepper and the cheese.

The technique for getting your cacio e pepe right is not complicated, but it's essential that you follow it to a T if you want to get a rich and smooth sauce, as Ixta would confirm after testing it about a thousand times. Using a wide pan and little water to cook the pasta is essential because it ensures there is a lot of starch in the water, which is the key to getting the sauce to emulsify. Grate the Parmesan and pecorino as finely as possible, and keep them separated to make sure they melt happily into the sauce. Finally, have everything measured out before you begin cooking; it all happens rather quickly after that.

1. Bring 5½ cups/1.3L of water to a boil in a wide pan on medium-high heat, then season with ¾ tsp salt. Add the bucatini and cook for 9 minutes (or per package instructions) until al dente, stirring every now and then so they don't stick together or to the bottom of the pan, and to ensure they are submerged. Drain, reserving all the cooking water (you should have about 2¼ cups/520ml—if not, top up with a little hot water).

2. Melt the butter in a large, high-sided, nonstick sauté pan on high heat until bubbling, then add the 1 tbsp za'atar and pepper and cook for 1 minute, stirring, until fragrant. Add the reserved cooking water, bring to a rapid boil, and cook for 5 minutes, until silky and reduced a little. Add the pasta and stir vigorously into the sauce. Add the Parmesan in two batches, continuing to stir vigorously as you go and waiting until the first half has melted before adding the next. Once the Parmesan has all melted, add the pecorino, continuing to stir until it has also melted and the sauce is smooth and silky.

3. Transfer the pasta to a lipped platter and finish with the olive oil, marjoram (if using), remaining 1½ tsp za'atar, and a small pinch of salt. Serve at once.

SERVES FOUR
As a side

RAINBOW CHARD WITH TOMATOES AND GREEN OLIVES

14 oz/400g rainbow chard, bases trimmed, leaves and stalks separated and each cut into 2½-inch/6cm lengths

1 tsp olive oil, plus ½ cup/120ml

5 garlic cloves, finely sliced

1 small onion, finely chopped (¾ cup/110g)

1 lemon: finely shave the peel to get 2 strips, then juice to get 1 tbsp

2–3 oregano sprigs (½ oz/10g)

2–3 ripe plum tomatoes, cut into ½-inch/1cm dice (1½ cups/300g)

table salt and black pepper

¼ cup/120g Nocellara olives (or other green olive), pitted and halved or quartered if large (¾ cup/70g)

¼ cup/5g basil leaves, roughly torn

This summery side dish will really benefit from using the best-quality, ripe tomatoes. Rainbow chard looks beautiful but, for flavor, Swiss chard will do an equally good job here. Swiss chard stalks tend to be wider, though, so you may need to cut them three times lengthwise, as well as crosswise.

This dish is great served warm soon after it's made, but the flavors actually get better with time. Make it a few hours ahead, if you like, or even the day before, and serve it at room temperature, or gently warmed through. There's quite a lot of aromatic oil, so grab some crusty bread to mop it up with.

Serve alongside za'atar cacio e pepe (page 104) for a midweek dinner.

1. Cut any wider chard stalks in half lengthwise (or into thirds if they are particularly wide). Place a large sauté pan on medium-high heat and add the 1 tsp olive oil. Add the chard stalks and sauté for 4 minutes, then add the leaves and sauté for another 3 minutes, until the leaves are just cooked. Transfer to a large bowl, cover with a plate, and let soften in the residual heat for another 3 minutes, then remove the plate.

2. Wipe the pan clean and return to medium heat. Add 6 tbsp/90ml olive oil, the garlic, onion, lemon peel, and oregano and fry gently for 12 minutes, stirring often, until the onion is soft and golden. Add the tomatoes, ½ tsp salt, and a good grind of pepper and continue to cook until the tomatoes are just beginning to soften (about 2 minutes if they are ripe, or a couple of minutes longer if they are not). Stir in the cooked chard and the olives, then remove from the heat and let sit for 5 minutes, for the flavors to come together.

3. Discard the oregano sprigs and lemon strips and transfer to a lipped platter. Drizzle with the lemon juice and remaining 2 tbsp olive oil. Finish with the basil leaves and a good grind of pepper and serve.

SERVES FOUR
As a main

SWEET POTATO IN TOMATO, LIME, AND CARDAMOM SAUCE

4–5 medium sweet potatoes, skin on, cut crosswise into 1-inch/2½cm-thick rounds (2 lb 2 oz/1kg)
2 tbsp olive oil
4½ tsp maple syrup
¼ tsp ground cardamom
¼ tsp ground cumin
table salt and black pepper

TOMATO, LIME, AND CARDAMOM SAUCE
5 tbsp/75ml olive oil
6 garlic cloves, finely chopped (not crushed)
2 green chiles, finely chopped (seeded for less heat)
table salt
2 small shallots, finely chopped (¾ cup/100g)
1 x 14-oz/400g can whole, peeled tomatoes, blitized in a food processor or blender until smooth
1 tbsp tomato paste
1½ tsp superfine sugar
1½ tsp ground cardamom
1 tsp ground cumin
2 limes: finely zest to get 1 tsp, then juice to get 1 tbsp; cut the remainder into wedges
1 cup/240ml water

2 tsp finely chopped dill

This dish has had countless incarnations. It started its life as mackerel kofte in a sauce made with tomato, lime, and cardamom that we fell in love with. It then went through a range of vegan dumplings served in the same sauce. In the end, after an embarrassing number of attempts and every member of the crew giving it a go, we figured that simply roasted sweet potato works best. It is a brilliant combination, but the sauce would also be delicious with chickpeas, tofu, fish, or chicken. In any case, serve rice or couscous alongside.

1. Preheat the oven to 500°F/240°C fan. Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper.

2. In a large bowl, mix the sweet potatoes with the olive oil, maple syrup, cardamom, cumin, ½ tsp salt, and a good grind of pepper. Spread out on the prepared baking sheet, cover tightly with aluminum foil, and bake for 25 minutes. Remove the foil and return to the oven for 10–12 minutes, or until the rounds are cooked through and the undersides are very nicely browned (this might take longer if your sweet potato rounds are particularly large, or indeed less time if they are smaller, so do keep an eye on them).

3. For the sauce: Meanwhile, put the olive oil, garlic, chiles, and ⅛ tsp salt into a large sauté pan, for which you have a lid, and place on medium heat. Fry very gently for 8–10 minutes, stirring every now and then, until the garlic is soft and fragrant (you don't want the garlic to brown or become crisp, so decrease the heat if necessary). Transfer half the oil, chiles, and garlic to a small bowl, leaving the rest in the pan. Add the shallots to the pan and cook for 5 minutes, stirring often, until soft and translucent. Add the blitized tomatoes, tomato paste, sugar, cardamom, cumin, lime zest, and 1 tsp salt and cook for 5 minutes, stirring a few times. Add the water, bring to a gentle simmer, and then cook for 5 minutes.

4. Transfer the sweet potatoes, browned-side up, to the pan of sauce (not all of them will fit in the sauce, but that's fine, just pile them up haphazardly). Decrease the heat to low, cover, and continue to cook for 10 minutes.

5. Mix the dill and lime juice with the reserved chile and garlic oil and drizzle over the sweet potatoes. Serve from the pan, with the lime wedges alongside.

SERVES FOUR
As a side

ASPARAGUS SALAD WITH TAMARIND AND LIME

TAMARIND AND LIME DRESSING

1½ cups/35g mint leaves
¾ cup/15g parsley,
roughly chopped
1 tbsp white wine
vinegar
1 tbsp honey
2 tsp store-bought
tamarind paste
(or double if you're
extracting it yourself
from pulp; see page 20)
1 anchovy fillet in olive
oil, drained (optional,
adjust seasoning if
not using)
½ tsp ground cardamom
½ tsp ground black lime
(see page 18; optional)
2 green chiles, seeded
and finely chopped
1 small garlic clove,
crushed
1 tsp Dijon mustard
1 tsp lime zest
2 tbsp olive oil
2 tbsp water
¼ tsp table salt

14 oz/400g thick-
stemmed asparagus,
woody ends trimmed
4½ tsp olive oil
1 tbsp lime juice
¾ cup/15g mint leaves,
roughly shredded
3 tbsp pistachios, very
lightly toasted and
roughly chopped
table salt

We surprised ourselves twice with this salad. First, by how good raw asparagus can taste and feel in the mouth when sliced super-thin; and, second, by how well the asparagus holds its own and actually benefits when being matched with intensely sharp ingredients such as tamarind and lime. Try it the next time you get your hands on a bunch of extra-fresh but not too thin (these will be hard to slice) asparagus spears.

You'll make more dressing than you need here, but it can be tossed with salads or drizzled on roasted vegetables. It will discolor a little, but will still be fine to eat.

Slice the asparagus and mix the salad just before serving, to keep the thin asparagus slices as crunchy as possible.

Serve with fried tofu or roast chicken, or alongside potato and gochujang braised eggs (page 99) for a light lunch or dinner.

1. For the dressing: In a food processor or a spice grinder (for a smoother sauce), blitz together the mint, parsley, vinegar, honey, tamarind paste, anchovy (if using), cardamom, black lime (if using), chiles, garlic, mustard, lime zest, olive oil, water, and salt until you have a thick paste. Spoon into a clean jar and refrigerate for up to 3 days.

2. Using a vegetable peeler, or a mandoline if you have one, finely slice the asparagus into long strips and mix with half of the olive oil, half the lime juice, half the mint, half the pistachios, and ¼ tsp salt. Transfer to a serving platter or bowl and set aside.

3. In a small bowl, stir together 2 tbsp of the dressing with the remaining olive oil, remaining lime juice, and ¼ tsp salt. Spoon the dressing over the asparagus, finish with the remaining mint and pistachios, and serve at once.

SERVES FOUR
As a side

CHAAT MASALA POTATOES WITH YOGURT AND TAMARIND

1 lb 10 oz/750g baby new potatoes, cut lengthwise into ½-inch/1cm-thick slices
table salt
2 tbsp olive oil
1 tsp chaat masala
½ tsp ground turmeric
black pepper

CILANTRO CHUTNEY
1½ cups/30g cilantro
1 green chile, seeded and roughly chopped (2 tbsp)
1 tbsp lime juice
¼ cup/60ml olive oil
¼ tsp table salt

SWEET TAMARIND DRESSING
4½ tsp store-bought tamarind paste (or double if you're extracting it yourself from pulp; see page 20)
1½ tsp superfine sugar
¼ tsp chaat masala
1½ tsp water

1 cup/250g Greek-style yogurt
½ small red onion, peeled and thinly sliced into rounds on a mandoline, if you have one, or by hand (½ cup/60g)
1 green chile, thinly sliced into rounds (2 tbsp)
1½ tsp coriander seeds, toasted
1½ tsp nigella seeds, toasted

This dish is inspired by aloo chaat, an Indian street-food that has many regional variations, all of which are not for the fainthearted because they are loaded with sweet and sour and a fair bit of crunch. This is a slightly tamer version, though still pretty "noisy," both in flavor and looks. It's absolutely perfect for a weekend lunch, alongside other vegetables, such as eggplant with herbs and crispy garlic (page 251) or radish and cucumber salad with chipotle peanuts (page 263). You can also serve it as a side with roasted lamb or chicken.

Chaat masala is the slightly tangy spice mix that gives this dish its distinctive flavor. It gets its sharpness from amchoor, dried mango powder, which is used widely in Indian cooking as a souring agent. You'd recognize the flavor from samosas and pakoras, where it is often used.

Both the cilantro chutney and the tamarind dressing are great condiments to have on hand to brighten up sandwiches and wraps, to spoon over eggs, or to serve alongside tofu or fish. Double or triple them, if you like—the chutney will keep in the fridge for up to 1 week and the tamarind dressing for up to 2 weeks. *Pictured on pages 194–195.*

1. Preheat the oven to 450°F/220°C fan. Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Put the potatoes and 2 tsp salt into a medium saucepan and top with enough cold water to cover by about 1½ inches/4cm. Place on medium-high heat, bring to a boil, then simmer for 6 minutes, or until the potatoes are almost cooked through but still retain a bite. Drain through a sieve and pat dry, then transfer to the prepared baking sheet and toss with the olive oil, chaat masala, turmeric, ¼ tsp salt, and a good grind of pepper. Roast, stirring once or twice, for 35 minutes, or until deeply golden.
3. For the chutney: Meanwhile, in the bowl of a small food processor, combine the cilantro, chopped chile, lime juice, olive oil, and salt and blitz until smooth. Set aside.
4. For the dressing: In a small bowl, whisk together the tamarind paste, sugar, chaat masala, and water and set aside.
5. Spread the yogurt on a large round serving platter. Top with the chutney, swirling it through without completely incorporating. Drizzle with half the dressing and top with the potatoes, onion, and sliced chile. Drizzle with the remaining dressing, then sprinkle with the coriander seeds and nigella seeds and serve at once.

PAIRING: ACIDITY

SERVES FOUR

As a main

TAMARIND RASAM

1½-oz/50g block tamarind pulp

1 oz/30g fresh ginger, skin on, thinly sliced

½ oz/15g fresh turmeric, skin on, thinly sliced (or ⅓ tsp ground turmeric)

1 large green chile, roughly sliced (¼ cup/20g)

5 cups/1.2L water
table salt

9 oz/250g cherry tomatoes

7½ tsp sunflower oil

½ lemon, halved again lengthwise, then cut into ¼-inch/3mm-thick half-moons (seeded)

1½ tsp cumin seeds, finely crushed

1 tsp black mustard seeds

2 whole dried red chiles

20 fresh curry leaves (optional)

3 garlic cloves, crushed

3-4 plum tomatoes (10½ oz/300g), coarsely grated and skins discarded

2 tsp superfine sugar

RICE BALLS

1 cup/200g Thai sticky rice, soaked for 1 hour in cold water, then drained

¾ cup plus 3 tbsp/220ml water

¼ tsp table salt

2 tbsp sunflower oil

1 onion, finely chopped (1 cup/150g)

2 garlic cloves, crushed

½ oz/15g fresh ginger, peeled and finely grated

¾ cup/10g cilantro, roughly chopped, plus whole leaves to garnish

3 green onions, thinly sliced (½ cup/30g)

STICKY RICE BALLS IN TAMARIND RASAM BROTH

Our version of rasam, a South Indian broth, is sharp, complex, and rich from the spices and the charring of tomatoes and lemons. We urge you to try it, despite the longish ingredient list, if only to discover a whole range of new flavors.

Use tamarind pulp (see page 20), not paste. The pulp, available in any Indian supermarket, is more complex in flavor and provides the sweet-acid kick that you're after here.

You'll need to soak the rice in water for an hour. The balls can be formed a day ahead and kept refrigerated. Just bring them back to room temperature before pouring in the hot broth.

1. For the rasam: Put the tamarind pulp, ginger, turmeric, green chile, water, and 1 tsp salt into a medium saucepan on medium-high heat. Bring to a boil, then decrease the heat to medium and simmer gently for 20 minutes, stirring to break apart the pulp. Strain through a sieve into a bowl, pushing down with a spoon to extract as much flavor as possible. Discard the aromatics.

2. Toss the tomatoes in 1½ tsp of the sunflower oil. Place a large sauté pan on high heat. Once smoking, add the tomatoes and cook, tossing occasionally, until charred and blistered, about 4 minutes. Set aside. Add the lemon to the pan and cook until charred, 30-50 seconds per side, then set aside. Decrease the heat to medium-high; add the remaining 2 tbsp sunflower oil, the cumin seeds, mustard seeds, dried chiles, curry leaves (if using), and garlic; and cook for 90 seconds, until fragrant. Add the grated tomatoes and cook for 5 minutes more, then add the sugar, tamarind liquid, charred tomatoes, and ½ tsp salt. Bring back to a boil and simmer for 8 minutes. Set aside.

3. For the rice balls: Put the drained rice into a medium saucepan, for which you have a lid, and add the water and salt. Bring to a boil on medium-high heat, then decrease the heat to medium-low and cover loosely with the lid, leaving a small gap for some steam to escape. Cook for 20 minutes, then remove from the heat and let sit, uncovered, until cool.

4. Put the sunflower oil into a sauté pan on medium-high heat. Add the onion and cook for 7 minutes, until softened and browned. Add the garlic and ginger and cook for 90 seconds. Remove from the heat and transfer to a bowl. Add the cooked rice, chopped cilantro, and green onions and mix well. With lightly oiled hands, form into twelve balls, weighing 1 oz/30g each.

5. Return the pan of rasam to medium-high heat to heat through, then add the charred lemon slices and sticky rice balls. Top with cilantro leaves and serve at once.

PAIRING: CHILE HEAT

SERVES FOUR

As a side or as part
of a mezze spread

½ cup/80ml olive oil

6 garlic cloves, finely
sliced

1 tbsp rose harissa

(adjust according to the
brand you are using; see
page 20)

1 red chile, finely chopped

½ preserved lemon, finely
chopped, discarding any
seeds (1 tbsp)

4½ tsp lemon juice

2 lb 2 oz/1kg zucchini,
finely sliced

table salt

½ cup/10g basil leaves,
roughly torn

SUPER-SOFT ZUCCHINI WITH HARISSA AND LEMON

Zucchini, strictly speaking, aren't controversial, but they do tend to get a pretty lukewarm reaction from many, including, regrettably, two of our test-kitchen colleagues. The reason for this is probably zucchini's high water content, which tends to make them, well, watery. There are plenty of ways to combat this—frying and grilling are two examples—but we actually use it to our advantage here, cooking the zucchini slowly in their own juices, making them fantastically soft and enhancing their flavor by a long soak with fried garlic. (And in the process, we also managed to win over our two zucchini-iffy colleagues, we're happy to announce.)

The zucchini are very good hot, but are better after 15 minutes or so, or even at room temperature, once the flavors have had a chance to get to know each other. Make them a day in advance, if you want to get ahead; just hold off on adding the basil until you're ready to serve. *Pictured on page 206.*

1. Place a large, nonstick sauté pan on medium-high heat and add the olive oil and garlic. Fry gently for 4 minutes, stirring often, until soft, golden, and aromatic. You don't want the garlic to become at all browned or crispy, so decrease the heat if necessary. Remove 3 tbsp oil, along with half the garlic, and transfer to a small bowl. Add the harissa, chile, preserved lemon, and lemon juice to the bowl; stir together; and set aside.

2. Return the pan to high heat and add the zucchini and 1½ tsp salt. Cook for about 18 minutes, stirring often, until the zucchini are very soft but still mostly holding their shape (you don't want the zucchini to brown, so decrease the heat if necessary). Stir in half the basil and transfer to a platter. Spoon the harissa mixture over the zucchini. Let sit for 15 minutes, then sprinkle with a pinch of salt and finish with the remaining basil before serving.